

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 228660 TOSEC 270175

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT REYKJAVIK 1225 ACTION SECSTATE, PARIS, MONTREAL,
OTTAWA DTD 15 SEP 76.

QTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 1225

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT ALSO PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY EAGLEBURGER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, IC

SUBJECT: POST-MORTEM ON TWA HIJACKING

REF: STATE 227327

FOLLOWING ARE EMBASSY'S COMMENTS ON HIJACKING KEYED TO NUMBERED
PARAGRAPHS IN REFTEL:

1. COMMAND AND CONTROL - EMBASSY PERCEIVED NO COMMAND AND CON-
TROL PROBLEMS AS HIJACKING EVOLVED. LONG ADVANCE WARNING
(EIGHT HOURS) WE HAD BEFORE AIRCRAFT ACTUALLY ARRIVED IN ICE-
LAND WAS HELPFUL IN THIS RESPECT SINCE IT MADE POSSIBLE IMME-
DIATE CONTACT WITH GOI FOREIGN MINISTRY.

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2. COMMUNICATIONS - FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT COMMUNICATIONS WERE

EXCELLENT THROUGHOUT. DEPARTMENT'S INITIAL ALERT AND INSTRUCTIONS WERE TIMELY AND VALUABLE. EMBASSY TELEPHONE CALLS TO OPERATIONS CENTER THROUGH BOTH COMMERCIAL AND CINCLANT LINES MOVED QUICKLY, POSSIBLY OWING TO FACT INCIDENT OCCURRED SATURDAY AM, WHEN TRAFFIC MAY HAVE BEEN LESS. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT AT ANOTHER TIME VOICE COMMUNICATIONS INVOLVING THIS POST WOULD NOT BE AS EFFECTIVE, THUS REQUIRING MORE USE OF TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS THAN WAS CASE LAST WEEK-END. EMBASSY WAS ALSO IN MINUTE-BY-MINUTE CONTACT WITH EVENTS AT KEFLAVIK AIRPORT BY VIRTUE OF DCM'S PRESENCE IN US BASE OPERATIONS CONTROL CENTER THROUGHOUT EPISODE. IN ACCORDANCE EMBASSY'S OWN PLAN AND BASE SOP EMBASSY OFFICER WOULD BE SIMILARLY LOCATED IN EVENT OF FUTURE SUCH OCCURRENCE. IN GENERAL, FACILITY OF COMMUNICATION WAS STRONGPOINT IN DEALING WITH INCIDENT.

3. RELATIONS WITH ROLE OF HOST GOVERNMENT - UPON AMBASSADOR'S ALERT TO GOI OF EXPECTED ARRIVAL OF HIJACKED PLANE AND REITERATION OF US POLICY IN MATTER, ICELANDIC AUTHORITIES ASSUMED OVERALL CONTROL OF SITUATION AND RETAINED IT THROUGHOUT. BECAUSE OF PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIP OF KEFLAVIK CIVIL AIR FACILITIES TO US DEFENSE FORCES, PLUS US RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SECURITY OF ICELAND, THERE WAS CLOSE CONTACT BETWEEN ICELANDIC AND US OFFICIALS WITH US ELEMENTS MAKING THEMSELVES AVAILABLE TO ICELANDIC AUTHORITIES FOR SUCH TECHNICAL ADVISE OR ASSISTANCE WITHIN POLICY GUIDELINES AS MIGHT BE REQUESTED WHILE MAKING CLEAR GOI WAS IN CONTROL. GOI HANDLING OF SITUATION APPEARS TO HAVE GONE SMOOTHLY THROUGHOUT. PUBLICLY STATED GOI POLICY IS ONE OF MAXIMUM REGARD FOR SAFETY OF HOSTEGES. PERHAPS IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT GOI CONCENTRATED ON ARRANGING FOR DEPARTURE OF HIJACKED PLANE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, WITH NO RPT NO GOI ATTEMPT BEING MADE TO SEEK RELEASE OF PASSENGERS HERE. GOI HANDLING OF THIS INCIDENT AND REACTION THERETO WAS CONDITIONED BY ICELANDIC BELIEF AIRCRAFT WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY ONLY IN-TRANSIT AND THEREFORE SHOULD BE HURRIED ON ITS WAY. WE ARE THEREFORE NOT CONFIDENT OF GOI'S ABILITY TO DEAL WITH HIJACKING OR SIMILAR THREAT INVOLVING SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER DEMANDS ON GOI. FROM STANDPOINT OF PHYSICAL SECURITY ALONE, ICELAND IS NOT EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH SERIOUS HI-CONFIDENTIAL

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JACKING THREAT. ACTING FONMIN PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED THIS IN REMARKING THAT IT WAS GOOD THING INCIDENT OCCURRED AT KEFLAVIK RATHER THAN ANOTHER AIRPORT WHERE US HELP MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE. IN SHORT, HOST GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF SITUATION WENT SMOOTHLY CHIEFLY BECAUSE HI-JACKERS' OBJECTIVES IN COMING TO ICELAND WERE LIMITED. MORE COMPLICATED SITUATION REQUIRING GREATER GOI INVOLVEMENT COULD POSE REAL PROBLEMS FOR ICELANDERS WHOSE CON-

TINGENCY PLANNING IS LIMITED BY THEIR INEXPERIENCE WITH
THIS KIND OF PROBLEM.

4. WASHINGTON BACKSTOPPING - WASHINGTON BACKSTOPPING WAS
EXCELLENT. WE HAVE NO SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT.

5. US POLICY - THERE WERE NO PROBLEMS IN INTERPRETING
OR IMPLEMENTING US POLICY WHICH WAS FULLY UNDERSTOOD BY
ALL US ELEMENTS INVOLVED.

BLAKE UNQTE: ROBINSON

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